

REMARKS

Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 1-44 will be pending in the instant application. Claims 1, 9, 33 and 44 are independent. Applicant acknowledges and thanks the Examiner for withdrawal of the specification objections, previous prior art rejections, and claim rejections under 35 USC section 112. Reconsideration of the remaining rejections and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-43 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Marijinissen et al., (U.S. Patent No. 5,876,860) or Schmitz et al., (U.S. Patent No. 5,993,980). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

It is noted that the Examiner has not combined the two relied upon patent documents. Instead, the Examiner has relied upon Marijinissen et al. and Schmitz et al. individually.

Independent claim 1 sets forth a combination of limitations including specific processes that take place while in a vacuum. Referring to independent claim 1, the heating process, the applying process, the transferring and the subjecting process all take place while in a vacuum, wherein the transfer takes place **without interruption** of the vacuum. **Thus, transfer of a blade from a coating region to a postheat region takes place without interruption of the vacuum.** Similarly, independent claims 9, 33, and new claim 44 set forth elements that make it clear that the apparatus or method provides for transfer of a blade from a coating region to a postheat region **without interruption of a vacuum**. The Examiner is respectfully requested to further consider the specific recitations of the various independent claims.

Both Marijinissen et al. and Schmitz et al. fail to teach or suggest at least **transfer of a blade from a coating region to a postheat region takes place without interruption of the vacuum.** Even if they arguably did teach coating in a vacuum and postheat treatment in a vacuum as alleged by the Examiner, which Applicant does not admit, there is still clearly no teaching or suggestion about a transfer which does not interrupt the vacuum. The vacuums of the coating and postheat, even if they exist, are separate vacuums, and not part of a maintained vacuum. Applicants believe that the claims clearly clarify this distinction and thus respectfully request withdrawal of the outstanding prior art rejections.

In summary, neither of the patent documents relied upon by the Examiner teach or suggest an apparatus or method that uses a maintained and uninterrupted vacuum environment to heat, coat and/or postheat a turbine blade.

With regard to the rejected dependent claims, Applicant respectfully submits that these claims are at least allowable due to their dependence upon allowable independent claims.

In accordance with the above, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Entry of Amendment After Final

Applicant respectfully requests entry of this Amendment After Final in that it merely clarifies the claims to place them in a clearly allowable form and in that it does not raise any new issues requiring further consideration and/or search.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the objections and rejections and allowance of each of claims 1-44 in connection with the present application is earnestly solicited.

Telephonic Interview requested if necessary

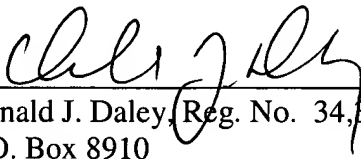
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at (703) 668-8000 to schedule a personal interview.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-0750 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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